

CABINET

7 FEBRUARY 2023

COUNCIL PLAN REFRESH 2023/24 ADDENDUM REPORT

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adrian Gulvin, Portfolio Holder for Resources

Report coordinated by: Phil Watts, Chief Operating Officer

Contributors: Children and Adults – Directorate Management Team
Public Health
Regeneration, Culture and Environment – Directorate Management Team
Business Support

Summary

The Council Strategy Refresh 2023/24 report was considered by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2023. The comments of the Committee are set out below, followed by officer responses where relevant.

1. Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.1 The Chief Organisational Culture Officer introduced the report which presented the annual refresh of the Council Plan and proposed what measures and targets should be used to track performance against the Council's key priorities for 2023/24.

1.2 She also explained that since the report had been published, the Department for Education had discontinued one of the measures which related to the percentage achievement gap at Early Years Foundation Stage Profile between the lowest attaining 20 % of children and the mean (code CASEIEYFS Gap). Data had not been available since 2018/19 due to the pandemic and officers therefore proposed that the measure be removed. Officers confirmed that data relating to the percentage of different groups of children achieving "a good level of development", dependent on characteristics such as Identified SEN, Ethnicity, FSM, would continue and would be reports in the Council's annual schools' report.

1.3 Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

1.3.1 **Excess weight in children (PH14 and PH15)** – comment was made that despite officers' focus on this target, it remained stubbornly red and that a

wider strategic approach and investment into resourcing this area of work was vital to see improvements made.

- 1.3.2 **Children Social Care** - reference was made to the suite of measures relating to children's social care and that the issues regarding staff shortages put the improvement journey at real risk of progression. ILAC7 and ILAC7(N) were also referred to as being tricky measures but essential to the overall improvement journey. In response the officer explained that ILACS7 reduction was to provide an ambitious but more realistic target for 2023/24 by changing the target from 80% to 50% and the proposed removal of ILAC7(N) provided an opportunity for the organisation to focus on the one more meaningful target, as both were measuring the same thing but in a different way, which was causing confusion.
 - 1.3.3 **Number of maintained primary schools that are good or better** – it was being proposed that this measure be removed due to so many schools no longer being maintained by the Local Authority. Concern was raised about this change and it was considered that instead it should be a measure that covered all schools, including academies, reflecting the Council's role in school improvement generally.
 - 1.3.4 **Smoking at time of delivery (PH16)** – it was suggested this target should be revisited to be more ambitious.
 - 1.3.5 **Missing areas** – comment was made that there should be measures on the following priorities which were important for Medway; Child Friendly Medway, climate change, digital enablement and health inequalities. Officers confirmed that the next look at the Council Plan, for 2024/25, would be a complete rewrite rather than a refresh, which would look at areas such as these and would include a fundamental new approach to performance monitoring which would move to a greater focus on output.
 - 1.3.6 **Average journey time (NI 167)** – it was considered this measure needed reviewing further as lived experience was that congestion was high in Medway and did not reflect current medway, particularly given the measure was established in 2011.
 - 1.3.7 **Role of Chief Organisational Culture officer in performance** – in response to a question about the role of this post in relation to performance, particular for measures that are performing poorly, it was explained that dialogue across directorates and CMT was key in ensuring targets are aspirational but achievable. The next refresh for the 2024/25 plan, would provide an opportunity to transform how performance is managed across the organisation.
- 1.4 The Chief Organisational Culture Officer undertook to feed the comments back to relevant officers and confirmed that consultation on the refresh had been conducted with officers and had been considered at Corporate Management Team.

1.5 The Committee agreed to forward its comments to Cabinet, as set out above and noted that those Council Plan measures still awaiting a proposed target, would be further considered by the Corporate Management Team and that Full Council would be asked to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, to agree the final measures.

2. Officer response

2.1 Where possible, officers have provided a response to the points raised by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as follows:

2.1.1 **Excess weight in children** – in latest performance data, PH14 (excess weight in 4-5 year olds) is rated green and PH15 (excess weight in 10-11 year olds) is rated amber. New data for 2021/22 has moved Medway's performance into a much more favourable position. For example, the rate in PH14 has reduced from 31.5% in 2020/21 to 23.7% in 2021/22 and Medway's reduction for this measure is one of the highest in the South East.

2.1.2 **Children's Social Care (ILAC7 and ILAC7(N))** – In relation to ILAC7, officers would recommend that this remains at 80% to continue to work to our ambition in getting at least 80% of Children's Social Care audits to be graded good or outstanding, which is vital if Medway is to reach an Ofsted judgement of Good or better. In relation to ILAC7(N), we continue to recommend that this is removed, to enable the service to focus on its clear ambition. However, clear narrative will continue to be provided to Members to help demonstrate the direction of travel in this area.

2.1.3 **Number of maintained primary schools that are good or better** – officers are recommending the removal of this measure because there is no longer a benefit to differentiate between maintained and academy primary schools, given so many schools are now academies. However, the partnership measure SE2 OEPr (Percentage of all Primary Schools judged good or better) which can be found further down on the table, is proposed to remain.

2.1.4 **Smoking at time of delivery** – The target for this measure reflects the national plan (through to 2030 albeit it is being refreshed). Whilst we always try and exceed performance, our local work is part of a system wide effort. Specifically, the NHS is introducing Tobacco Dependency Services into Maternity Departments. We are supporting them to do this and are working with Medway NHS Foundation Trust to put additional resources in place. Performance on this target therefore is reflective of the work that is in our direct control.

2.1.5 **Average journey time (NI 167)** – Review of this indicator will take some considerable time for officers to ascertain if there is an alternative way of measuring the indicator and establishing a reviewed baseline. This will therefore be done in preparation for the fundamental rewrite of the Council Plan for 2024/25.

3. Updated recommendations

- 3.1 The Cabinet is asked to note the comments of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in the addendum report.
- 3.2 The Cabinet is asked to recommend to Full Council the adoption of the refreshed Council Plan measures as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to:
- The ILAC7 target (the percentage of Children’s Social Care Audits graded good or outstanding) remaining at 80% rather than be lowered to 50%, as recommended in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The Cabinet is asked to note that those Council Plan measures still awaiting a proposed target, will be further considered by the Corporate Management Team and that Full Council will be asked to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, to agree the final measures.

4. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 4.1 The Council Strategy sets the high-level objectives for the Council and is underpinned by the Council Plan which includes the detailed performance measures and delivery plans explaining how the strategic objectives are to be met. Agreement of the Council Plan measures will ensure continued delivery of the objectives and effective monitoring of performance.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None